



Poll Watcher & Election Observer Guidelines

Poll watchers and election observers are an important part of Montana's open and transparent election process. This document is intended to provide poll watchers and election observers guidelines regarding their rights and responsibilities.

General Guidelines

Election day is for the elector. As a general rule, no person can obstruct the polling place or engage in solicitation of an elector in any manner that interferes with the election process or obstructs the access of electors to or from the polling place. Most unlawful polling place conduct can be punishable as a misdemeanor under Montana law. Poll watchers are encouraged to report any conduct that interferes with the election process to the chief election judge. Poll watchers, too, need to be mindful of not interrupting or obstructing the election process.

Poll Watcher/Election Observer Responsibilities

Before the Election:

- Notify the county election administrator of which polling place you wish to observe and which political party (if any) you represent.
- Review these guidelines and Title 13 Election Laws of Montana.

On Election Day:

- Check-in with the chief election official at the polling place, election office or tabulation center and find out where your designated observation area will be.
- Wear at all times while in the polling place, election office or tabulation center a name tag or button provided by the chief election official that clearly identifies you as a poll watcher or election observer.
- Observe the proceedings at the polls, election office or tabulation center in a manner that does not interfere with electors or election officials.
- Ask questions of election officials at a time and in a manner that does not interfere with the conduct of any part of the voting process.
- Direct any concerns or suggestions to the chief election official for the location, unless otherwise instructed.
- Take calls in a secluded spot or outside the polling place to minimize distractions to voters.

After the Election:

- Report any questions, concerns or suggestions to the county election administrator.

Poll Watchers May:

- Request the Register Judge repeat the name of an elector if the first pronunciation was not understood by the poll watcher.
- With the permission of the chief election judge, view the Register during a time that does not interfere with any voting.
- Challenge any elector by properly completing the Affidavit of Individual Challenging an Elector. A challenge may be made on the grounds listed in 13-13-301, MCA.
- Speak to any election judge within a polling place to discuss the application or interpretation of election procedures/laws so long as it does not interfere with the election procedures as determined by the chief election judge.
- Observe all of the vote counting procedures and all entries of the results of the election after the closing of the polls (or before the closing of the polls if the poll watcher or observer remains sequestered with counting judges until the close of polls).

Poll Watchers May Not:

- Interfere with the conduct of the election.
- Assist in any way with official election process operations at a polling place, election office or tabulation center, including but not limited to instructing voters.
- Physically handle any voting materials or equipment without the express permission of the election administrator or chief polling place election official.
- Move or rearrange tables, chairs or other election day equipment without the express permission of the chief election official.
- Sit at an official worktable or view confidential voter information on any equipment or paper document.
- Communicate with voters regarding voting for or against any candidate or issue on the ballot unless they are at least 100 feet from any entrance to the polling place.
- Display or wear any campaign material.